Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 17, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--In order to add stiffness to the blower and reduce vibration, the blower may be divided into two or more sections in an axial direction, as illustrated in FIG. 4. However, one consequence of dividing the blower into sections is that a region of non-homogenous laser gas flow is created in the discharge gap between the two electrodes. As shown in the cross-sectional view of FIG. 5, flange [[210]] 201 divides the blower cavity into two axial compartments. The laser gas from both compartments is not allowed to interflow until after being discharged from the blowers and directly before entering the discharge gap between the electrodes. In the short distance between the end of the top portion of flange [[210]] 201 and the discharge gap, the laser gas volumes from either side of the flange have not had an opportunity to properly interflow, and there is a volume of inhomogeneous gas as shown at FIG. 4 between the two laser gas volumes that are directed to the discharge gap. This inhomogeneous laser gas volume lowers the productivity of the laser. It would be desirable to provide a device for supporting the interior ends of the blowers without creating such a region of inhomogeneous laser gas.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 8, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--In order to reduce or substantially eliminate the volume of inhomogeneous flow in the discharge region between the two volumes of laser gas, a present embodiment of the tandem blowers includes flange 301 depicted in FIGS. 6 and 7. In FIG. 6, flange 301 is shown supporting bearing 204. FIG. 7 is an enlarged view of a cross-section through plane C-C of FIG. 6. FIG. 7 shows flange 301 mounted on the housing 211 only in the region where the outer circumference of the blower nears housing 211 and opposite electrode 207. In contrast to flange 201, this preferred embodiment including the improved flange 301 is not further affixed to housing 211 nor is it affixed to lower electrode support 209. The flange 301 is shaped so that it does not interfere with mixing of the gases discharged by adjacent blower sections. Part of a trailing edge 301b of the flange 301 is located inside a cylindrical volume defined by the combined cylindrical forms of the blower sections, as shown in FIG. 7. The left and upper portions of the cylindrical blower 203 are visible in FIG. 7 behind the trailing edge 301b of the

flange 301. The discharges of the blower sections are not separated by the flange, which allows the discharged gases to intermix. Once the gas has flowed beyond the trailing edge 301b of the flange 301, it is able to mix with the gas being discharged by the adjacent blower. Thus, the laser gas is allowed to interflow soon after it enters the inlet portion of the blowers, and prior to entering the discharge gap between the electrodes 207 and 208.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 5, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--Another alternative embodiment of the improved flange is shown in FIG. 9. In this embodiment, the base of improved flange 401 is attached to housing 211, opposite upper electrode 207, and the upper portion of flange 401 is attached to the lower electrode support 209. In this embodiment, leading edge portion 401a and trailing edge portion 401b are shaped in an aerodynamic fashion, *e.g.*, as shown in FIG. 8. In addition, the flange 401 is cut off on the downstream end of the blower compared with flange 201 shown in FIG. 5. As in the FIG. 7 embodiment, the FIG. 9 embodiment has part of a trailing edge 401b of the flange located within a cylindrical volume defined by the combined cylindrical forms of the blower sections. The discharges of the blower sections are not separated by the flange, which allows the discharged gases to intermix. This allows for a reduction of the volume of the inhomogeneous region as it enters the discharge gap between the upper electrode 207 and lower electrode 208, in accord with the alternative embodiment that is shown in FIGS. 7 and 8. An ~~advantaage~~ advantage of the embodiment shown at Fig. 9 is improved mechanical stability and reduced vibration sensitivity.--